

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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OXLEY: OUTLOOK BETTER FOR ROAD FUNDING EQUITY PLAN

INDIANAPOLIS – After years of fighting for a plan that would provide rural Indiana with its fair share of road funding, State Rep. Dennie Oxley (D-English) was optimistic today that lawmakers would be able to pass a program in 2005 that ensures an equitable distribution of gasoline tax dollars throughout the state.

Oxley serves as a co-author of House Bill 1336, which would include pickup truck registrations in the funding formulas used to determine local allocations of state gas taxes. The measure received resounding support this week from the House Roads and Transportation Committee, and will soon be eligible for consideration by the full House.

"Proposals like House Bill 1336 have passed in practically every session since I first came to the Statehouse in 1998," Oxley said. "I've authored or co-authored a bill of this type every year since coming here. I must say, though, that this is the first year that I've been here that I feel we have an actual chance of putting this proposal into law."

Oxley's plan would change the funding formulas used to allocate road dollars to Indiana counties by including pickup truck registrations in those formulas. At present, the formulas allocate road funds to counties based on the numbers of passenger car registrations in each county.

"Since trucks are excluded, the current funding formula benefits large urban areas, like Indianapolis and Marion County," Oxley said. "That is completely unfair to areas like the counties I represent in the 73rd House District. All of these counties pay their fair share in gas taxes, yet we are deprived of the funding we need to complete critical road projects because of a formula that was created and jealously guarded by legislators from larger cities."

Since Oxley's proposal re-allocates where the existing funding goes, it would provide more money for rural counties without any increase in taxes.

"Present estimates are that 77 counties would gain funding through this redistribution of gas tax revenues," Oxley said. "It is a win-win situation for those areas of the state that desperately need every penny they can get to take care of their roads."

Oxley said he believes that House Bill 1336 will receive final approval in the Indiana House in the days to come. What makes him more optimistic that the measure will become law in 2005 is a change in leadership in the Indiana Senate, where proposals of this type have died in the past.

"The big stumbling block for road funding equity has always been State Sen. Lawrence Borst, a Republican from Greenwood who served as the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee," Oxley noted. "Since Sen. Borst represented suburban Indianapolis, he always blocked passage of these equity bills."

"However, he was defeated when running for re-election in 2004, and lawmakers from rural areas like Sttae Sen. Robert Meeks (R-LaGrange) are in positions of influence where they might be able to pass legislation like House Bill 1336," he continued. "Nothing is ever certain at the Statehouse until the end of the session, but those of us who want to see fairness in road funding feel that we have a good shot of seeing our efforts become law in 2005."

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